The Builder.

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THERE is a bustle in the workshops; and buildings in progress are being pushed along so that the "hoards" may be taken down before good May-day, when the world is to be emptied into London.* The Marble Arch is being proceeded with rapidly. It is already as high as the springing of the main archway. The marble of which it is composed, and which, as we have often said, is not adapted for external use in England, had decomposed considerably in parts, so that much of it has required rubbing and working. We have objected to the site chosen for it, and even more strongly to the hasty way, without the slightest intimation to the public, in which this was determined on. But as the thing is done, and alteration is hopeless, it seems useless to keep up an ill-feeling by repeating objections. The object now should be to make the structure as complete and satisfactory as possible under the circumstances. At the time when Buckingham Palace was first placed in the hands of Mr. Blore, with a view to its improvement, the arch was, as it has continued to be, a subject of difficulty and discussion. It was at length determined to abandon the expensive style of decoration commenced by Mr. Nash; to finish it up at as little cost as possible; and, after finishing it in a plain manner, to leave it standing where Mr. Nash has placed it, satisfied with exclaiming, "Thou canst not say I did it." Among the fragments of Mr. Nash's intention was found a handsome frieze, executed by some of the first sculptors of the day, and intended to adorn the upper compartment of the arch. Not knowing how to apply this piece of work, yet desirous of preserving it from being cast aside as rubbish, Mr. Blore fixed the several pieces of the frieze in separate compartments of the external wall of Buckingham Palace; but was compelled, by the nature of the elevation, to place them at such a height that since that time they have never attracted observation, and are probably forgotten; and, moreover, they are now imposed in the court formed by the recent addition to the building.

Would it not be worth while to consider, whether, in finishing the arch in its new site, the original plan might not partially be carried into effect, adding to the beauty and importance of the work, by removing these pieces of sculptured marble, and others now scattered about, to their original destination? A bronze Victory, or car and horses, resembling that on the Brandenburgh Gate at Berlin, would be a material addition to its general effect.

At Buckingham Palace, whence it was removed, the new enclosure, in accordance with the plans of Mr. Decimus Burton and Mr. Nesfield, is being erected, consisting of massive stone piers, about 15 feet high, with an ornamental iron railing on a large stone curb. On the four piers in the centre, forming the entrances, are,—on one, the lion; on the second, the unicorn; and on the two others, groups of dolphins, with their tails entwined, to carry lamps; the whole carved under Mr. John Thomas. There are also to be sculptures in the panels of some of the piers.

Relative to the figures already up, we have received a number of objecting letters. One writer says:—"Surely we are getting into an odd fashion of sculpture for buildings. If a coat of arms is to be erected, it must now be broken into fragments—the supporters are divided, and each has a separate sentry-box of his own; as, for instance, the lions at the Victoria Tower, Westminster. Then, again, on the gate-posts at Buckingham Palace: you see a lion bolt upright, with his board, on one post, and look to the right, three doors off, and you see a monster of an unicorn, trying to hold on by his board; and then, on the main gate-posts, you see shoals of blubber-headed fish trying to twist each other's tails; looking, for all the world, as if they had come by sea all the way from Cathay to a strange land, in woeful plight, being bad sailors, and fairly put on the shelf for their peccadilloes."

Another, who pretends to be a Frenchman, supposes they were put there to enliven the coming foreigners and provincialists. In seriousness, however, they are not so satisfactory as could be desired.

The ugly wreath, unnaturally projecting forward above the shield in the central group on the top of the palace, to which we objected at the time of its execution, has not been altered. A slashing writer in the *Times*, who signs himself "The Lion that supports the Royal Arms," says, between the central groups "the eye of faith may discern a gate leading to nothing, and above it either a wreath extended to crown the kingdom's acknowledged 'strongest,' when Mr. Carlyle shall have found him, and he may chance to be wending his way to the seventh heaven through the said gate, or an eyelet hole, in which a 'sufficient' rope may be rove to hang the arch-scoundrel when he shall have been ultimately detected by the same philosopher, and be finally despatched through the airy portal into infinite space." How difficult is excellence!*

At the British Museum, also, the enclosure is now going on. A granite curb about 3 feet high above the pavement is being erected, on brick foundations, large and deep. The piers for the central gates will be very massive, and so will be the iron scroll-work that will form the enclosure. Our readers know that statues are to surmount some of the piers. The scaffolding has been put up for raising the sculpture which is prepared for the tympanum of the portico, so that gradually we may hope to get some life into the exterior of the building. The decoration of the new western galleries (by Mr. Collman, under Mr. Smirke) is now nearly completed, ready for the reception of the Assyrian antiquities, which are at present just as much buried as if Layard had never lived. The ceiling of the new galleries is formed, like those of the other galleries, into a series of small deeply-sunk panels: the ground of these is coloured blue, and upon this, in the centre of each, is a gilt star, or a composition of four honeysuckles, placed alternately.* The plaster bed-moulds around each panel have red in them, and on the soffit of the main beams, forming the larger divisions of the ceiling, panels are formed by green lines. The frieze on the walls has a white honeysuckle pattern on a quiet green ground; but where it runs out over the projecting piers, frets are substituted for the honeysuckle. The upper part of the walls is coloured sage green, with panels formed by red lines, and the lower part (the podium) is to be coloured dark red, as a back ground for the sculptures. The decoration of the Elgin room will be richer,—the walls wholly red.

We have no doubt that the general effect, when the works are completed, will be satisfactory as to colour; at all events, far superior to the blank white walls and ceilings formerly in vogue. What we have to object to is the entire absence of *art*: there is nothing that called for thought, or will give thought. There is a little more variety in the Etruscan room, where, by the way, the common glass skylight has a bare and inharmonious effect.

Coming away from the Museum, we went to see if any steps had been taken in Leicester-square; thence to the Ordnance Office, Pall-mall, that we might reply to an inquiry on the subject; and afterwards to the building near Thames-bank, which is being fitted up as a "Mechanics' House" for the May meeting.

Our readers know that the centre of Leicester-square is the spot fixed upon for the erection of a building to receive Mr. Wyld's intended great Globe. After much difficulty, and the payment of no less than 3,000*l.*, the arrangement for the ground is now completed. The building is to be of a circular form, 90 feet across, enclosing the Globe, of 60 feet in diameter. Corridors for promenade will surround it, and it is to have four covered approaches from the sides of the square. The external elevation at the sides is proposed to be 20 feet high, surmounted by a large bell-shaped roof of zinc. The building itself will be mainly of timber, the inner surface of the Globe of plaster of Paris.

In the centre of the Globe will be a series of galleries, four in number, constructed so as to enable visitors to see every portion of the model. These galleries, it is said, will afford accommodation for 1,000 or 1,500 persons at one time, and are to be approached by spiral staircases in the centre. The entrance is to be at the south of the Globe.

Mr. Welch is the architect. Tenders were received a few days ago for the construction of the main portion of the building, and the tender of Mr. Myers was the lowest; but

* Among the new schemes in America in connection with this dearest upon our shores, is a lottery, under the name of "The World's-Fair Art-Union," limited to five subscribers, each paying 5 dollars. Every subscriber is to receive an engraving of the Interior of the Building when fitted up, and there are to be twenty-five first class prizes and twenty-five second class prizes: the first class prizes to be "a first cabin passage from New York to London and back, with every requisite for the voyage, together with 300 dollars for expenses in London; and each second class prize will be a first cabin passage from New York to London and back, with every requisite for the voyage." The advertisement, which we find in the *New York Day-Book*, says: "We have taken the trouble to ascertain, by a careful and elaborate estimate, that to produce an engraving worthy of this memorable occasion, and to make 4,000 copies of it, would cost at least 8,000 dollars. For such an engraving the printsellers would charge certainly 10 dollars, probably 15 dollars a copy, and would exhaust 20,000 dollars of profit. Instead, however, of this enormous sum being swallowed up by the printsellers, we will publish the engraving by co-operation; so that each subscriber can obtain a copy at, to say the least, *half the price the printseller would charge*, and then have a large sum to spare to distribute prizes." An American print is to be sent over!

* A correspondent suggests an alteration of the line of railing round the part where it meets the iron gates dividing the space in front of the palace from the Birdcage-walk; but it would not be understandable without a diagram. We may also mention here a plan by Mr. Gray for laying out the park, which has some picturesque features.

* These patterns are from Greek fragments.

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